

## **absque misericordia** by **handydandynotebook**

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**Summary:**

“Hey,” Tory greets, plopping down in the chair across from the redhead.

“Hey,” Max returns, looking her over. Maybe sizing her up, maybe a bit wary.

Tory understands the wariness even though she doesn’t share it. She warms up pretty easy when she can tell she likes someone. Goes on the offensive just as easy when she can tell she doesn’t. But she definitely likes Max. Max is Cobra Kai material, Tory can tell. It’s right there in her eyes.

## absque misericordia

### Author's Note:

i'm shelving this 'verse, i told myself. why should i remain on crack planet when better things await me back in the realm of slasher/gorrnor. why should i put thought into one easter egg prison of cracktastic crossovers when i have multiple neglected og wip of guts and glory. i shouldn't adhfhgfhjdfhigdh and yet here i am. still on crack planet. priorities, what priorities fml.

**pls hit the back button if ur not familiar with this series. it's cracktastic af and context dependent, u will prolly be confused af if you've not read prior entries.**

“Hey,” Tory greets, plopping down in the chair across from the redhead.

“Hey,” Max returns, looking her over. Maybe sizing her up, maybe a bit wary.

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“You’re really rocking the denim,” she throws out, surveying the jean jacket, collar rumpled and slightly frayed. Punky but not too edgy, not too try-hard.

“Thanks.” Max’s lips twitch up at the corners as she folds her hands on the table.

“Believe it or not, I have an eye for fashion. Put together some kickass thrift store ensembles back on the outside. With a few outlet mall editions, maybe, when I could get away with the five-finger-

discount.” Tory winks.

“So...we’re doing this? We’re doing the small talk thing?” Max cocks a copper brow.

“I mean, we don’t have to.” Tory shrugs, absently scratches at her stomach. “I don’t really have anything new to tell you about Susan though. Couldn’t get switched to laundry, I’m sorry.”

“Okay.” Max shifts forward a bit, concern swirling in her gaze. “Well...how is she doing overall, do you think?”

Tory hesitates.

“I have to ask you,” Max insists, stern and firm. “I can’t trust a word my mom tells me.”

“She’d do better if she wasn’t stubborn,” Tory sighs out. Susan could’ve been Sweets’s princess if she didn’t get all weird about the dope. She would’ve been as safe as it’s possible to be.

“Stubborn?” Max echoes, disbelieving. “My mom? Are you sure we’re talking about the same person?”

“Uh, it’s complicated, I guess. I can’t really talk about it.”

Max’s eyes narrow. “I thought you didn’t know anything.”

“I swear I don’t know who’s fucking with Susan— but she did burn a bridge when it would’ve been smarter to make a friend instead. Big fish kind of friend, definitely would’ve deterred whoever is kicking her around.”

“Okay, that sounds more like my mom. She sucks at making friends... you’re sure it’s not a guard?”

“Pretty sure, yeah. Like I said, they don’t usually leave marks on the face. Besides, their shoes are different. The print in Sue’s cheek looked sorta like the sole of our work boots. I compared it to mine to check while she was snoozing.”

Max balls her hands into fists on the tabletop, pure murder in her

eyes. Yep, she's Cobra Kai material, all right.

"When I do find out who it is, I'll rip her shoulders right outta the sockets," Tory promises. "Believe me, I can and I will. There's a lot of shit I'm not good at, but I am good at fighting. If I didn't get locked up, I could've been the first girl to win the All Valley."

"Someone beat you to the punch— err, kick, I guess," Max mutters, her expression tight. "I looked into that info you wanted me to. Same year you got locked up, a girl won the AVT with a crane kick."

"For real?" Tory gasps, heart stuttering in her chest. She wants to know and she doesn't. "Was it Aisha Robinson? Cobra Kai?"

"Um, no. Samantha Something. Uh, I don't remember the dojo. Something with an M."

Of course. Of fucking course. In what world *wouldn't* it be Sam?

She got everything else. Rich parents, fancy house, Miguel. Why wouldn't she get that too?

"LaRusso," Tory seethes, bearing her teeth in an ugly rictus as her blood begins to boil. "That fucking cunt."

"Whoa, okay." Max blinks rapidly, eyes widening. "I take it you're not friends."

"She gave as good as she got, y'know. Kicked me over the railing. And yet." Tory lifts her elbows on the table, fanning her fingers like lion fish fins as bitterness seeps through her stomach. "I'm the only one here."

Max stares at her for a very long moment.

"I'm sorry," she says eventually, cool but not unkind.

Tory thinks she means it.

"Well, whatever." She drops her arms, restlessly taps her fingers. "More to life than some silly karate tournament. Um, if you didn't, it's okay, obviously, but, was there...I mean, the other stuff I asked

you about, could you find anything?”

“Yes,” Max says, nods just once. “You might not want to see it.”

And Tory knows.

It’s written on Max’s face as plain as her freckles. She sees it and she knows. It’s so much worse than stupid Samantha LaRusso going about her life in glory and gold while Tory rots and wilts away.

Max unfolds a piece of paper from her pocket and silently passes it across the table. It is an obituary. It is Miguel Diaz’s obituary. He smiles up at her in faded black and yellowy white. It’s an old clipping. He was taken off life support just three months after the school brawl.

Tory wasn’t the one who sent him flying. But she might as well have. Nothing would’ve happened at all if she didn’t start the fight, fellow cobras rallying around her like her rage was theirs too, her wrath their shared venom. None of them are here now.

The tears spring to her eyes sudden and hot. Tory sinks her teeth into her tongue so she does not scream, beats her open palms against the edge of the table in quick succession, doesn’t stop until an officer barks a threat. She wants to break something. She wants to break someone. Maybe herself.

“Fuck,” she hisses.

“I’m sorry,” Max repeats and her voice is a little softer.

“Goddamn.” Tory furiously scrubs at her tears.

“Maybe I shouldn’t have told you...”

“No, I needed to know for sure. I’m just sick of everything being so goddamn unfair. And cruel, he—he lived.” Tory’s palms still sting and she savors the sensation. “He survived the actual fucking fall two stories down just to get the plug pulled on him later? What kind of cruel fucking joke is that?”

Max’s face does something weird and then there’s that tough-as-nails

look in her eyes that tells Tory everything she needs to know even as her voice goes raw.

“It was like that with Billy too.”

“Really?” Tory asks and her heart’s crammed so full of Miguel and loss, she isn’t sure how much she can care but— but she wants to know. Of course she wants to know. Of course she wants someone who understands, wants to share her pain like she’d shared her wrath, fanged, serpentine monster she is.

“There was, um...there was this bad accident at the mall. Billy was really brave but he got like, butchered. I thought he was gonna die right there.” Max gives a small head shake and the pain in her voice peals. “I was so, so relieved when he didn’t but the relief was a lie. Because six days later, he’s septic. How’s that for a cruel fucking joke?”

“God, that’s awful.” Tory thinks of Sweets and knots her hand in her hair, tugging hard on the strands.

She’s often felt there is nothing worse in this world than hope. She believes it now more than ever, she reaches across the table to sneak a quick touch to an almost-hardly-stranger’s fingers and silently buries what’s left of her hopes with Miguel. Her heart becomes a shallow grave between shaky breaths and Tory won’t cry anymore, she won’t, and she remembers why she shows no mercy.

She cannot show what she does not know, she cannot express something she’s never experienced.

#### **Author's Note:**

this is the 'verse where erryone is miserable, so.  
miggy gets to be dead post s2 finale. i'm so sorry,  
miggy. rip.